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SuperPower begins construction on $26 million cable project

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SuperPower Inc., a subsidiary of Intermagnetics General Corp., on Monday began the construction phase for a 350-meter superconducting cable that will run between two Niagara Mohawk substations in Albany, N.Y.

"This is a key step as we move this important demonstration project from the engineering phase into the construction phase," said Glenn Epstein, chairman and chief executive officer of Intermagnetics.

Sumitomo Electric Industries, The BOC Group and Niagara Mohawk, a National Grid company, are working with SuperPower, the project manager, to demonstrate the increased efficiency, reliability and safety of superconducting power cables compared to conventional copper cables. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority and the U. S. Department of Energy are contributing funding for the project.

The four-year Albany cable project, with a projected $26 million cost, will feature a cable running between the Niagara Mohawk Riverside and Menands substations, directly below I-90.

In 2001, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority agreed to contribute $6 million to the project. In 2003, the Department of Energy pledged $13 million following the confirmation of SuperPower's partnership with Sumitomo. SuperPower and its three private sector partners are sharing the remaining cost.

"The blackout of August 2003 dramatically highlighted the importance of electricity delivery to the nation's economy and to most aspects of our everyday life," U.S. Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham said. The "cable project is an example of technologies we are investing in that will dramatically improve our ability to move electricity and help us to modernize our ailing grid system."

Philip J. Pellegrino, president of SuperPower, said the superconducting cables will be able to carry three to five times more power than traditional cables, reduce energy waste, and deliver power at lower voltages, reducing the need for step-up and step-down transformers.

Sumitomo Electric Industries, a major international developer and manufacturer of electric power cables, electronics, telecommunications and automotive equipment, will fabricate the 350-meter, 34.5 kV, 800-ampere cable.

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